

"Kid Mechanic" Built "Flivver" out of Junk— Won Pike's Peak Climb

How Noel Bullock, 21, With Discarded Auto Parts Assembled a Car, Built His Own Engine, Drove His "Tin Can" to Colorado Springs, Entered the Race "Broke" and by Sensational Driving Beat Whole Field of Crack Pilots and America's Highest Priced Cars

By J. B. Day.

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THIS is the story of a the aggregate cost me more than all Nebraska "kid," the rest of the machine, but no single barely turned voting age, who carved himself a niche in the automobile Hall of Fame, out in Colorado, Labor Day, chanic.

When he shinned up the Pike's Peak auto highway in a home-brewed flivver—approximately cost \$400—winning the fourth annual world's championship hill climbing contest against a field numbering many of the highest-priced cars turned out of the automobile factories of America.

His name is Noel Bullock and he hails from North Platte. He's an automobile mechanic by profession; an optimist by nature, and he surges an "itch" to write his name alongside those of Barney Oldfield, the Chevrolet brothers, Ralph Mulford and the hosts of speed demons who have made racing history.

For several years Bullock has enjoyed considerable of a reputation as a dirt track driver in the immediate vicinity of his home town, but the Labor Day race was his first dip into the "big time" game. That the success he achieved with his nondescript distance annihilator augurs well for the realization of his ambition goes without saying.

The notability of his feat was enhanced by the fact that he was pitted against many seasoned race drivers. Several of the pilots had participated in each of the climbs since the classic was established, whereas Bullock had driven over the course but once and was only vaguely familiar with the many dangerous turns and switchbacks on the cloud-ridden boulevard.

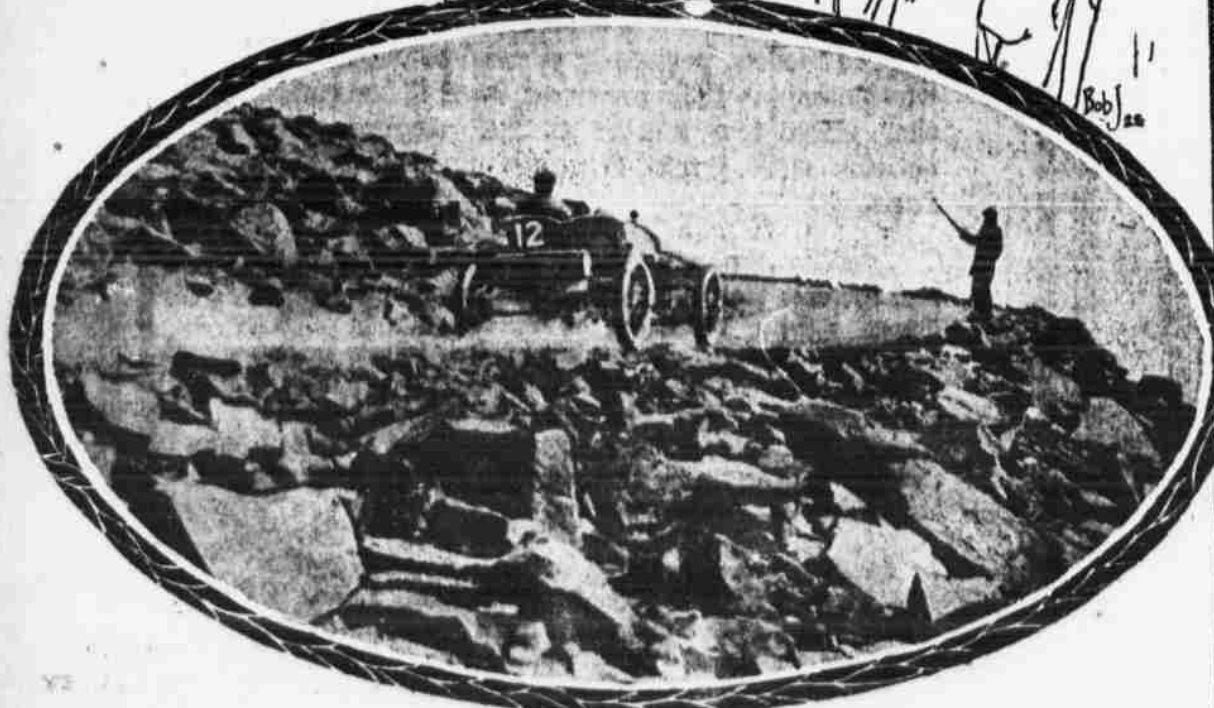
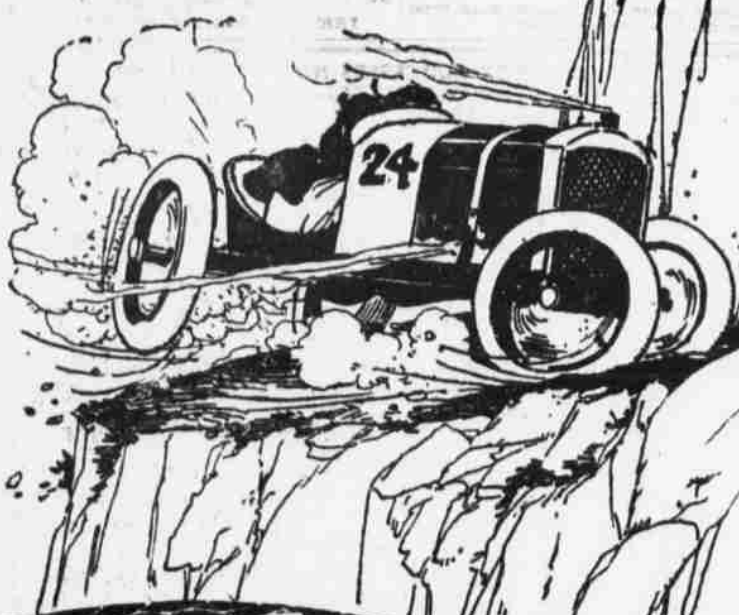
The component parts of Bullock's mount came from an automobile graveyard in North Platte. The engine block cost him \$50 and was the most expensive single part compris-

On the engine block Bullock rigged up an eight-cylinder motor—offspring of his own genius as a motor mechanic.

The contraption was finished a week before the day of the race. Since he didn't have the necessary money to ship the machine by train, Bullock drove it overland to Colorado Springs—at the base of the famous peak up which the race course winds.

"The engine needed limbering up, anyway," the blond youth explained, "and the trip across the plains and mountains between North Platte and Colorado Springs gave me an opportunity to get a good line on just what my machine would do."

When Bullock drove into Colorado Springs on Saturday afternoon, Sept. 2, and pulled up in front of the garage where most of the entries for the race were quartered, race enthusiasts and pilots were hard put to suppress smiles of derision. Bullock sensed the spirit of ridicule in the attitude of the crowd which gathered



A "hairpin" turn on the course—it was on one of these dangerous curves that Bullock came within an inch of disaster and furnished the most startling thrill of the race.

ing the machine. The frame was about the "latest arrival," but he that of a light delivery truck which had outlived its usefulness, supposedly, when the North Platte grocer who owned the truck sold it to the dealer in automobile junk from whom Bullock bought it. The radiator was from a junked car likewise.

"I got me a set of wire wheels and four new tires," said Bullock, describing the assembling of his brain child, "because I knew I couldn't get anywhere in the race unless my wheels stood up. The wheels and tires, in

that he was not overburdened with funds.

Sunday he took "Old Lis," as he calls it, over the race course, for the dual purpose of testing its climbing ability on a real hill and familiarizing himself with the road.

Bright and early Monday morning he was at the starting point—Crystal Creek Bridge, between mile posts 5 and 6 on the highway. He greeted race officials with a broad smile and a hearty "Howdy!" and proceeded to talk shop with the pilots who had preceded him to the starting tape.

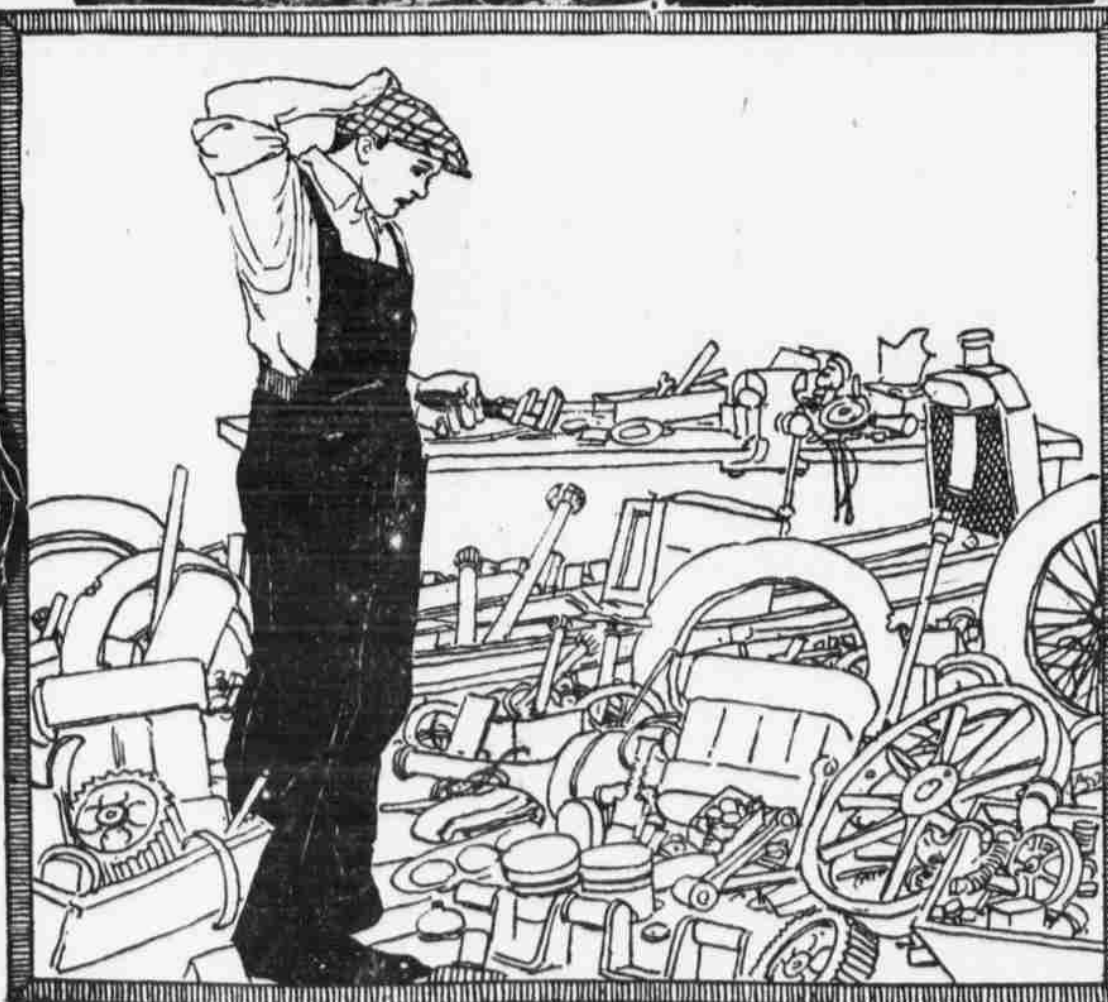
With the starting time of the first machine but a few minutes away, one

of the officials noticed Bullock had no number on his "bus."

"Where's your number?" he demanded.

"Haven't been given a number, yet," was the embryo speed king's comeback.

The official consulted his list and ascertained that Bullock was carded to start as No. 24.



From an automobile graveyard in North Platte, Bullock resurrected the miscellaneous parts that were to fashion his racing car. It could truthfully have been entered as a "Junk Special."

Bullock poked around in his tool box and brought out a small can of black enamel. He dipped a forefinger into the fluid and scrawled a name too symmetrical "24" on either side of the cow.

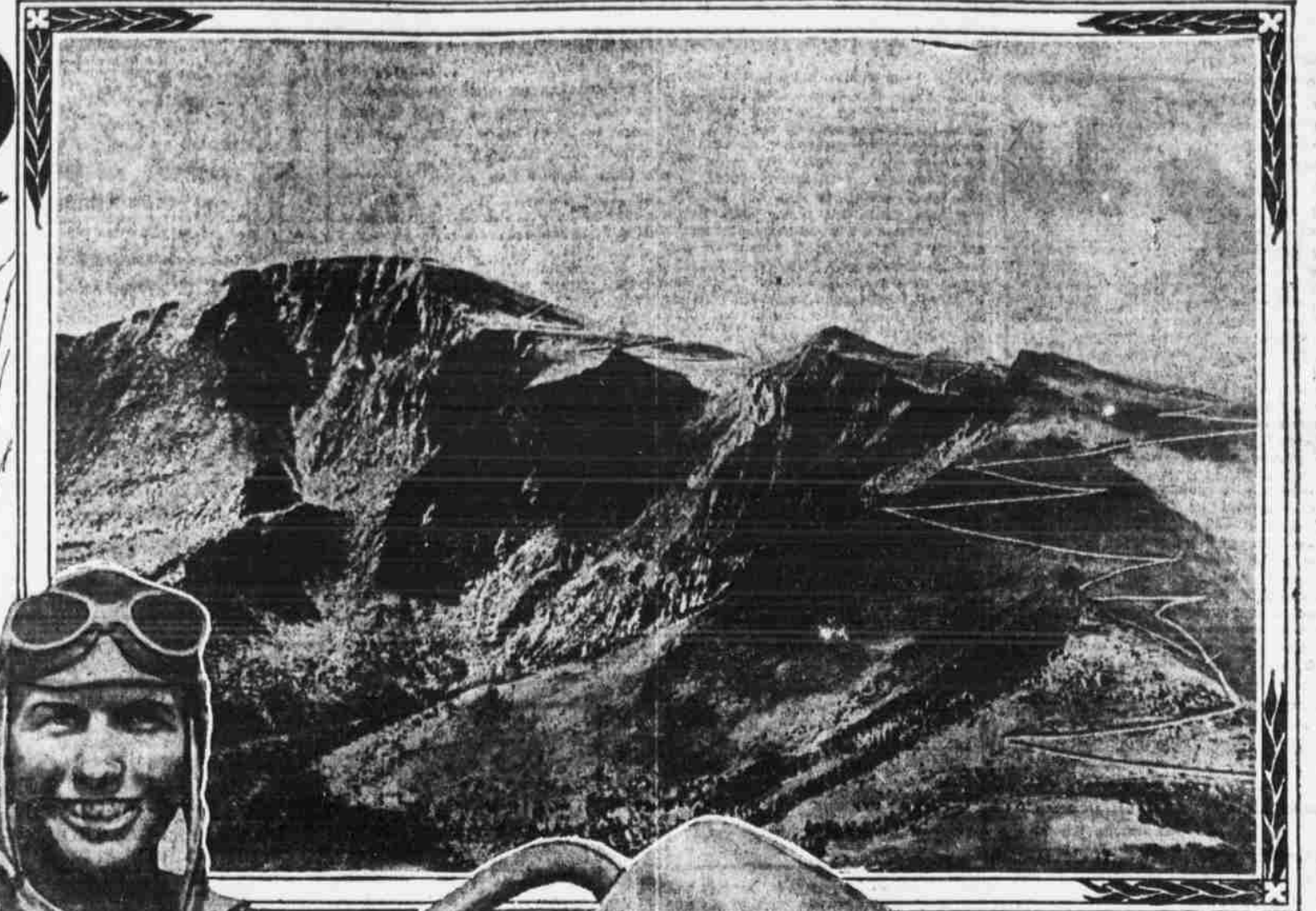
"Guess that'll do," he remarked as he stepped back to survey his work.

And then the race started. There was more or less excitement as the

tacing cars roared away from the tape at five-minute intervals to the accompaniment of cheers, whistling and handclapping, but there was one person in the vast throng who evinced no signs of surging blood or tingling nerves.

That person was Noel Bullock.

"Hop! I got in the money," he confided to an assistant starter. "If



Airplane view of the Pike's Peak auto highway, the course on which the world's championship hill climb is run.



Noel Bullock and the "home brewed flivver" in which he won the race in competition with some of the best drivers and highest priced cars manufactured in America.

don't I'll have to be borrowin' money to eat on."

The Pike's Peak auto highway runs from the picturesque little town of Cascade, in Ute Pass, to the very tip-top of America's most famous mountain. It is eighteen miles in length and the race, starting at a point between mile posts 5 and 6, covers a span of 12½ miles in which there are 147 curves. The average grade is 7 per cent, and the maximum grade 10 per cent.

The summit of Pike's Peak is 14,100 feet above sea level and there is scarcely a day in the year that does not see either rain, snow or sleet—frequently all three—on the vast stretches above timberline. Ordinary driving over the motor highway is what might be termed "ticklish business." Racing at top speed around the hairpin curves and letter "S" turns is calculated to make the stoutest heart flutter.

It had rained and snowed, alternately, on the summit Sunday afternoon and night, with the result that when race time arrived the last three miles of the course were almost ankle-deep in soft slush, making fast driving particularly precarious. Predictions were made that the pilots would not be able to approach the record of 15.24, made by Ralph Mulford in a Hudson in 1916.

When W. S. Haines, veteran pilot and the first starter, flashed up the peak in 20:21, the wisecracks evinced surprise and the chances of Bullock's gas-gargling contrivance seemed to vanish in thin air. But Bullock never quit smiling. His faith in his home-made racer did not falter.

Harold Brinker, piloting the machine which made the third best showing in the time trials which were the hazards attending the race, up held the day before Bullock arrived the world's highest automobile body in Colorado Springs, "barged the

hill!" in 20 minutes 45.4-5 seconds. King Rihley, last year's winner, took his car to the top in 30 minutes 5 seconds. P. R. Abbott went up in 20 minutes 7 seconds, and—

Noel Bullock, tow-headed "kid" from North Platte, Neb., a rank outsider, counted out by the wise guys before the race, crouched over the wheel of what his rivals called a "tin can," flashed over the tape in 19 minutes, 39.4-5 seconds, after one of the most hair-raising exhibitions ever seen on any race course.

He was still smiling when he clambered out of the improvised seat of his improvised flivver. He had reason to smile, for he had shown his tall, figuratively speaking, to the elite of the automobile universe; he was king of the hill climber, owner of 500 big round simoleons—the prize that went with his victory—and proud possessor, for a year at least, of the Penrose trophy, a cup fashioned of Colorado silver and gold, standing 48 inches high and reputed to be the richest trophy ever offered for an automobile race.

Bullock's exhibition of driving was catalogued by spectators who were on the course at previous races as the most startling they had seen. He took the dangerous curves with throttle wide open and exhaust roaring like a battery of machine guns. Once, he came within an ace of disaster—possibly death—when his machine skidded to the outer edge of the course and his left hind wheel dropped over the side. But the transmission housing stopped the threatened plunge, the tire on the right rear wheel bit into the gravel roadway and got him back on the course.

"I wouldn't want to drive it after dark," was his laconic comment on showing the hazards attending the race, up held the day before Bullock arrived the world's highest automobile body in Colorado Springs, "barged the